

Casuals survive late barrage but . . .

OH! WYCOMBE — HOW DID YOU DRAW?

Corinthian Casuals 1
Wycombe Wanderers 1

THERE were some remarkable scenes in the last 15 minutes of Tuesday night's game at Loakes Park when Corinthian Casuals, so often the whipping boys of the Isthmian League, somehow clung onto a point in the face of a barrage of Wycombe Wanderers attacks.

Roared into frantic action by the expectant crowd, Wycombe powered forward completely dominating the last quarter. But, in fact, they never looked like scoring even if they had played all night. As it was Burnham referee P. Wrennall added on five minutes of injury time but Wanderers just couldn't find a way through. Even Tony Horseman, usually so deadly from the spot, ballooned a penalty over the top.

After their run of five victories on the trot, including successes at Bishop's Stortford (5-1) and Bromley (2-0), it seemed Wycombe's days of missed chances were over. Far from it! Larry Pritchard, Horseman, Keith Searle and John Delaney all failed when in front of the net while goalkeeper Chris Lamb turned on a superb display. For Casuals it was about their top performance of the season.

It must also have been many a year since they took a point from Wanderers, especially on their own ground. But in a way, few would deny them their reward. Bottom of the table year after year, this term they are again in 22nd position with 100 goals conceded. In such a desperate position, many would have given up the ghost, but not Casuals. They fought tooth and nail for everything on Tuesday night.

It took Wanderers 16 minutes to present their first real attack when from a Horseman free kick, Pritchard sent a glancing header towards the corner of the net only for Lamb to fling himself full length and finger-tip the ball away for a corner — one of 13 won by Wycombe compared with the visitors' two.

But in the 23rd minute it was Casuals who gave the lesson in finishing when centre forward Ken Eshelby put them into a shock lead. Ian Longworth flighted over a dangerous corner and Tony Franklin's challenge upset 'keeper John Maskell who lost the ball. Eshelby wasted no time in hammering the loose ball high into the net, on the volley.

The unexpected breakthrough brought the best out of Casuals who harried and hustled their opponents into uncharacteristic errors. Under pressure, the Wycombe distribution from the back was always scrappy.

However, the pace eventually told on the visitors as Wanderers went forward in search for an equaliser. It came in the 36th minute with Searle once again on target for his fifth

goal in five games. It was virtually a replica of his two against Bromley on Saturday, running onto a through ball and crashing it past Lamb from a narrow angle. Before the break Peter Dick was booked after having strong words with the referee.

Horseman opened the second half with a hard drive in the 49th minute but again Lamb managed to push the ball away for a corner. Three minutes later, however, things looked safe for Wycombe when the referee awarded a penalty after Imison had held Searle back inside the area. But although sending Lamb the wrong way, Horseman side-footed his kick over the top.

CASUALS' TONIC

The penalty served as an additional tonic for Casuals who, although enjoying a fair share of luck inside their penalty area, fought like demons for every ball. Wycombe should have had the experience to deal with the situation.

Although pressed, Wanderers still carved out the chances. Twice Swain sent over inch perfect crosses for Searle and

Delaney but both sent their headers over the bar with an open net staring them in the face. Swain, the architect of the chances, was much improved on his Saturday performance.

As the half progressed, Wanderers became more and more anxious. With so much possession they still surged forward however, and Pritchard was robbed of a goal by the width of the crossbar in the 79th minute when he sent a delicate header against the woodwork.

Seconds later Johnny Hutchinson's drive was blocked by a wall of defenders. Longworth almost deceived John Maskell with an awkward shot in the 81st minute but play soon switched to the other end when Pritchard and Delaney both shot wide.

Even Ian Rundle tried his luck with a swerving shot inside the area. It looked a goal all the way but somehow Lamb got a hand to it, diverting the ball for a corner.

Alan Wakeling limped off in the 88th minute to be replaced by Tyler, who became the lone player upfront as the rest of the team crowded the penalty

area. With tension growing Hardy became the second Corinthian to enter the referee's book when he kicked the ball away from a Wycombe free kick and rightly had his name taken.

In the 95th minute Wycombe had one final chance for both points when they were awarded an indirect free kick inside the penalty area. Every one of the Casuals team lined up, completely blocking the goal and Delaney screwed his shot well wide. It was one of those nights! **S.E.**

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, I. Rundle, D. Bullock, J. Delaney, P. Birdseye, R. Williams, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson; A. Horseman, K. Searle, K. Swain. Sub A. Gane (not used).

CASUALS: C. Lamb, A. Franklin, P. Imison, R. Payne, N. Coulhurst, P. Dick, I. Longworth, W. Haigh, K. Eshelby, A. Wakeling (sub B. Tyler 89 mins), B. Hardy.

Referee: P. Wrennall (Burnham).

Half-time: 1-1.

Goalscorers: Wycombe — Searle (36), Casuals — Eshelby (23).